

Response

A. Introduction

Claims 1-24 remain pending in the application. According to the Examiner, claims 2 and 5-24 would be allowable if suitably rewritten. The Examiner has, however, initially rejected claims 1 and 3-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,319,256 to O'Hare (as to claims 1 and 4) and U.S. Patent No. 919,358 to Jeffery (as to claims 1 and 3-4).

B. The Claims

Applicant's invention comprises an apparatus with an inflatable enclosure having a flexible wall and at least one accessory mounted thereon and supported thereby. As previously written in claim 1, the invention also comprises leakproofing means to

ensure that *the accessory* mounted on the flexible wall *is leaktight with respect to the fluid used for inflating the enclosure*.

Solely for clarity, Applicant has revised claim 1 to specify that the leakproofing means "are provided inside the enclosure around the opening and the accessory."

By contrast, "leakproofing means [H, c^b]" identified by the Examiner in the Jeffery patent do *not* ensure leaktightness of the *accessory* ("F" or "A," according to the Examiner) *relative to the inflation fluid for the inflatable enclosure* ("D," according to the Examiner). Instead, elements "H" and "c^b" of the Jeffery patent--to the extent they provide any leaktightness--do so *between the enclosure and the atmosphere*. Claim 1 thus presents a structure neither disclosed nor suggested by the

Jeffery patent, and for at least this reason Applicant requests that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 and 3-4 based on the Jeffery patent be withdrawn.

Similar rationale exists for withdrawing the rejection of claims 1 and 4 based on the O'Hare patent. According to the Examiner, washer 22 forms the "leakproofing means" of the O'Hare patent. ***However, to the extent washer 22 performs a leakproofing function, it too provides leakproofing between enclosure 1 and the atmosphere***--rather than leakproofing between the accessory and inflation fluid for the enclosure as recited in claim 1. Applicant accordingly requests that this rejection of the Examiner be withdrawn as well.

Petition for Extension of Time

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), Applicant petitions the Commissioner for all extensions of time needed to respond to the Office Action.

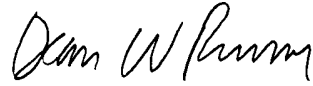
Fees

Attached is authorization to charge a credit card for \$1020.00 for the petition fee. Applicant believes no other fee presently is due. However, if Applicant's belief is mistaken, the Commissioner is authorized to debit Deposit Account No. 11-0855 for any additional fee due as a consequence of Applicant's submission of this paper.

Conclusion

Applicant requests that the Examiner allow claims 1-24 and that a patent containing these claims issue in due course.

Respectfully submitted,



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